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TO RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 0121
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0451
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7941
INFO RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA PRIORITY 1081
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN PRIORITY 2570
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PRIORITY 3086
RUEHTC/AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE PRIORITY 4418
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY 0405
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SIPDIS

STATE FOR PRM/ANE: RKINSEY; KATHMANDU FOR M WEINBERG

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TAGS: BT IN NP PGOV PREF PREL NO
SUBJECT: NORWEGIANS RECEPTIVE ON BHUTAN REFUGEES AND CORE GROUP GOALS

REF: STATE 113863

Classified By: Political and Economic Counselor Cherrie S. Daniels for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

¶11. (C) Poloff met on November 6 with Lasse Bjorn Johannessen, Senior Advisor in the Asia Section of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), to deliver reftel points. Johannessen recently returned from a tour as the Deputy Chief of Mission for the Norwegian Embassy in New Delhi. Johannessen said that the Bhutanese refugee issue was one that had been brought up several times by the Norwegian Ambassador with the government of Bhutan (GOB) on his three visits there. The typical response given by the GOB was that the refugees were not Bhutanese citizens, and that political problems with the government of Nepal prevented the GOB from having a proper dialogue about the issue--excuses which Johannessen characterized as without merit.

¶12. (C) Johannessen said the Norwegian Counselor for Health Issues resident in New Delhi would be going to Nepal soon, to present the GOB with \$300,000 which would push a health fund established by many countries over the \$24 million mark, which in turn would allow the GOB to begin spending the income from that fund on vaccinations. Johannessen said that this might give him some leverage to at least raise the issue.

¶13. (C) Regarding reftel demarche points, Johannessen was receptive, but noncommittal and clearly somewhat pessimistic, commenting that he could not understand why we were interested in the plight of these refugees. He asked how many refugees the U.S. had accepted, as he said he recalled we were going to accept "at least 20,000," but noted that only 20,000 had been accepted overall. He did say that the Norwegian government would certainly be interested in hearing more from Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Witten during the Core Group meetings we are setting up in Kathmandu and New Delhi.

WHITE